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RUEHYE/AMEMBASSY YEREVAN 8217
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SUBJECT: IRANIAN THIRD COUNTRY NATIONAL VISA APPLICANT FRAUD
PREVENTION CONFERENCE

¶1. SUMMARY. An Office of Fraud Prevention Programs (CA/FPP)-hosted conference focusing on fraud issues and consular processing for Iranian citizens, held in Washington, D.C., from September 29 through October 1, brought together 16 consular officers from top Iranian-national visa processing posts with representatives from the Department of State and other U.S. Government agencies. Participants discussed topics unique to the processing of Iranian cases, such as Iranian document security features and issuance procedures, Iranian naming conventions, Security Advisory Opinion (SAO) processing, and Iranian sanctions.

¶2. In addition to bolstering consular knowledge of fraud prevention resources, the conference aimed to standardize the processing of Iranian cases and improve the security of the process by establishing consistent baselines for identity and relationship indicators, providing improved customer service to bona fide applicants, and eliminating real or perceived advantages of applying at one post over another. This cable summarizes many of these resources and recommendations, including implementation of some standard operating procedures for handling Iranian cases. END SUMMARY.

Uniform Data Entry for Iranian NIV Applicants

¶3. Uniform data entry of Iranian applicants is vital in preventing visa shopping and maximizing our automated screening resources. When entering Iranian applicant data in nonimmigrant visa (NIV) and immigrant visa (IV) cases, consular officers should collect and include the applicant's full ten-digit national ID number instead of the old seven-digit number found on the shenasnameh, or Iranian birth certificate. This ten-digit ID can be found in Farsi on newer passports and in English and Farsi on the new national ID card (kart-de-melli). (Note: A Farsi/English number translation guide is

available on CA/FPP's Intranet website under "Conferences" for those posts without Farsi-speaking staff.) In addition, as Iranian women rarely use their husbands' surnames, consular officers should include the husband's surname in the alias field for all married female applicants as an important fraud prevention screening technique. For more information on Iranian names, please see 9 FAM Appendix F 518.

Assistance with Farsi Documents

¶4. CA/FPP has posted a number of guides to official Iranian documents, Iranian naming conventions, and much more on the CA/FPP Intranet website. The website should be the first resource for posts not familiar with Iranian documents and norms. However, even posts that process significant numbers of Iranian applicants have varying levels of access to Farsi speaking officers or LES staff. Posts with greater Farsi-related resources may be called upon to provide appropriate assistance for posts without Farsi-speaking officers or LES staff. If your post needs limited assistance understanding and evaluating Iranian documents, please coordinate that request through your CA/FPP post liaison officer who will help find another post or U.S. Government expert who can assist you. If you believe your post has a sustained demand for this type of expertise, consular managers should raise the matter with their regional management analyst in CA/EX and post liaison officer in the Visa Office's Post Liaison Division (CA/VO/F/P).

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Inclusion of Iranian Fraud Trends in Fraud Summaries of Designated Processing Posts

¶5. CA/FPP has undertaken a new initiative to compile and maintain an Iranian Country Fraud Summary to be posted on our Intranet website. Iranian-designated processing posts are requested to assist in this endeavor by reporting specifically on trends in Iranian NIV-, IV-, and American Citizen Services (ACS)-related cases in their semi-annual fraud summaries. CA/FPP will then extract and consolidate Iranian-related content into a comprehensive fraud summary which will be available to all posts and appropriate USG partners. The first edition of the fraud summary will be posted soon.

B2 Visas for Non-Business Travel and Sanctions

¶6. Consular officers processing Iranian B1/B2 (visitor for business or pleasure) applicants should be alert to the potential for abuse of visa status for the purposes of violating sanctions, particularly for Iranian-resident business owners or executives. Although it is impossible to completely control an applicant's activities once they have entered the United States, consular officers may wish to consider issuing only B2 visas to applicants traveling for personal reasons. While this will not completely prevent them from engaging in unauthorized activities, it will more correctly communicate to Department of Homeland Security Customs and Border Protection (DHS/CBP) officers and other DHS entities the applicant's stated purpose of travel at the time of visa application. For more information on what business activities are appropriate for Iranian citizens on B1 visas and what activities require waivers from the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC), consular officers should consult 9 FAM 40.31 N5.1-2 or www.treas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/programs/iran/iran.shtml. CA/FPP also has information on OFAC's Sanctions Enforcement Program on the Iran Fraud Prevention Conference page on its Intranet website.

Conveying 3B Visa Refusals

¶8. Per 9 FAM 40.4 N5.1, if an alien is refused a visa on security grounds, consular officers must restrict the statement of the reasons

for the refusal to a reference to the law or to the Code of Federal Regulations. Posts are not required to, nor should they, release information of a confidential nature to the interested party. In the case of applicants who are not regularly resident in the post's consular district and who are refused as the result of an SAO response, posts are permitted to inform the applicant on the phone (instead of requiring another personal appearance) and via e-mail; however, posts must ensure that applicants are informed by both means. Posts should scan a copy of the e-mail correspondence into the NIV record for purposes of record-keeping. This exception is made to avoid imposing significant travel costs upon the applicant solely for the purpose of refusing a visa in person. This is an exceptional circumstance and is not permitted for locally resident Iranian applicants or for applicants of any other nationality regardless of place of residence.

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Personal Appearance for Passport Pass-Back

¶9. Currently, there are no specific regulations requiring visa-ed passports to be collected in person by the bearer. Posts are encouraged to consider more liberal options for passport pass-back for applicants resident in Iran. Posts may wish to consider allowing friends and family members who present a signed letter of authorization from the bearer to collect the passport. Posts may also wish consider using a secure courier service to deliver passports in-country (i.e., to a local hotel where the applicant is staying) to eliminate the need for the applicant to travel personally to the consular section to collect his or her passport. Questions on what methods are most appropriate for your country and applicant pool should be referred to CA/VO/F/P and to the appropriate CA/EX post management analyst.

Overseas Document Verification

¶10. On occasion, consular staff may receive requests for verification of Iranian documents in connection with an application for immigration benefits, or a review of immigration status from DHS or other U.S. Government agencies. Because our overseas missions do not have a reliable means for verifying documents issued in Iran, consular staff should generally decline to accept these requests. If post determines it appropriate to review documents and obvious fraud indicators are evident, consular officers can and should highlight areas in which the document differs from other similar documents encountered at post. Officers should make clear in their response, however, that the analysis of the document is based solely on post experience and that post can neither definitively confirm nor refute the document's veracity. Posts that have questions about what is appropriate in a specific case should consult with their CA/FPP post liaison officer.

Managing Appointment Systems for Iranian Applicants

¶11. Several conference attendees expressed concerns about abuse of appointment systems for Iranian applicants, particularly Iranian travel agents, resulting in high no-show rates. One best practice that was discussed during the conference was to publish the day and time that appointments would be released so that the general public would have an equal chance at scheduling an appointment time when made available without having to work through a third party. Another post combats this problem by not allowing canceled appointments to be rescheduled, discouraging third parties and travel agencies from booking appointments using "dummy" data and then later canceling and immediately rebooking once they have sold the slot to an individual applicant. For posts that have more severe problems with appointment fraud and misuse, they should work with their CA/EX, CA/VO, and CA/FPP post liaison officers to identify the best solution.

Conclusion

¶12. CA/FPP sincerely appreciates the excellent participation by posts and presenters during this important conference. In an effort to make conference topics available to a wide audience, CA/FPP has established an Iran Fraud Prevention Conference webpage on our Intranet site at the following URL: <http://intranet.ca.state.gov/fraud/fpu/FPP%20Conferences/23262.aspx>, and also on

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our classified Intranet website. These sites provide useful resources on Iranian visa processing, naming customs, Department of Treasury-OFAC sanctions, asylum and refugee processing, trends in alien smuggling, and more. We continually strive to provide posts with as much information as possible to facilitate processing of these applications in a secure and customer-service oriented fashion.

Posts are encouraged to contribute to their CA/FPP liaison officer for posting additional helpful resources or reporting on Iran-related topics.

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